



## Sociocultural Anthropology <sup>[1]</sup>

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Sociocultural anthropology is one of the four main branches of anthropology. Sociocultural anthropologists focus on the study of society and culture, while often interested in cultural diversity and universalism. Additionally, sociocultural anthropology is often split into social anthropology and cultural anthropology.

### Methods

The methods of sociocultural anthropology are primarily ethnographic, through means of qualitative data. This contrasts with quantitative data, which is the type of data often used in other anthropological fields, such as archaeology and physical anthropology. [Ethnography](#) <sup>[3]</sup> is a holistic examination of culture, including aspects such as economy, political structure, ritual, and much more. It is often conducted through participant-observation, a technique in which an anthropologist resides in a cultural group and makes observations. This must be done with ethical considerations in mind.

### Social anthropology versus cultural anthropology

Sociocultural anthropology can often be split up into both cultural anthropology and social anthropology. However, there is considerable overlap between these two sub-disciplines.

While sociocultural anthropology is primarily the study of anthropology in North America, social anthropology tends to be the study of anthropology in Europe and Britain. For the sake of simplicity, in this section we will discuss sociocultural anthropology as a whole.

### Ideas

Sociocultural anthropologists are especially concerned with diversity and variation among cultures, consequently examining the concepts of cultural relativism and [universalism](#) <sup>[4]</sup>. Sociocultural anthropology is founded on the idea that people adapt to their environments in different ways, which over time, creates and develops culture. Sociocultural relativism is the idea that each culture has its own relative value and importance. This contrasts past ideas of cultural evolution. Sociocultural evolution is a widely disproved and disregarded theory, which states that all societies follow a unilineal pattern of evolution from barbarism to—usually—modern European civilization. This idea is the result of prejudice and is widely discounted by anthropologists today.

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